

# Firefighter receives honor

## Medal of Valor given to John Montosi at state's Firefighter of the Year ceremony in Worcester

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Like most firefighters, John Montosi will tell you it was "nothing special" what he did on Jan. 13, when he helped pull a Pembroke resident from her burning home. After all, he was just doing his job.

But the fact is, Montosi wasn't on the job. The Duxbury firefighter was driving home from work when he saw smoke in the sky about half a mile away and decided to make a detour to check that everything was under control. When he pulled up to 35 Valley Street, Pembroke, no fire crews had arrived yet. Then a resident told Montosi his wife was still inside.

Without his gear, without knowing when backup would arrive, Montosi just did his job, first trying the front door but finding the smoke too thick, and then breaking a front bedroom window to pull the woman to safety with the help of neighbors and passersby.

And though Montosi will tell you he was "just in the right place at the right time," his actions on Jan. 13 earned him the Medal of Valor at the 20th annual Firefighter of the Year Award Ceremony on Dec. 3 in Worcester.

Typically held in Boston, the event recognizes firefighters across the state for brave acts, community service and other efforts. This year's event was held at the Hanover Theatre in Worcester in recognition of the 10th anniversary of the Worcester Cold Storage Warehouse fire that killed six firefighters.

"It was kind of mixed emotions," Montosi said of the event. "Half of it was the 10th anniversary of a very sad day ... but it was also a day of celebration of a lot of great things that were done and a lot of heroic rescues that were made by the other award winners."

Montosi was told he would be receiving an award that day but he didn't know which one.

"It was surprising. It was an honor," he said. "It was nice to be recognized, but I was just in the right place at the right time, I guess, on my way home and trying to help out as much as I could."

The top award of the day was the Medal of Honor, often given posthumously, according to event manager Amy Dominici. This year's recipient was the late Lt. Kevin Kelley of Boston Fire Department, who died earlier this year when the brakes on his fire truck gave out.

Kelley's family attended the event along with a number of dignitaries including Gov. Deval Patrick, Lt. Gov. Tim Murray and Vicky Kennedy, wife of the late Sen. Ted Kennedy.

The senator received the Fire Marshal's Excellence in Leadership award for his career-long advocacy for the fire service.

Montosi was one of eight who received the Medal of Valor, alongside firefighters from Natick, Boston and Barnstable.

Nominations are opened up every year to all fire departments statewide, with a committee made up of state fire officials deciding the awards. Though Dominici doesn't vote on recipients, she has seen the committee make their decision over her many years of managing the event.

"You get to the Medal of Valor, and it's usually saving a life," she said. "Firefighters respond to incidents every day, and they'll all say, 'I was just doing my job,' but when you're putting your life in danger, you've got to say that's going above and beyond."

Not every award is given out every year, Dominici said, which gives the recognition all the more prestige.

Duxbury Fire Chief Kevin Nord and Pembroke Fire Chief Jim Neenan co-nominated Montosi and appeared before the committee to explain their reasons.

"Obviously, he should be recognized for his efforts," Nord said. "The act was something that he's paid to do, but in this particular case, he was certainly off duty and he had to go out of his way to see if everything was OK. He was able to possibly save someone's life, and that should be recognized in this day and age. There's not enough of the good stuff that gets talked about."

In November, Montosi received a departmental Medal of Valor, one of many service awards and citations that have been given to Duxbury firefighters at their annual fall dinner ever since Nord instituted the program in 2004.

Neenan said Montosi is well known in Pembroke even though he works in Duxbury. After growing up and attending school in town, Montosi interned with the Pembroke Fire Department during college.

"It was an outstanding effort, above and beyond," Neenan said of Montosi's actions on Jan. 13.



# Firefighter honored for saving woman from home



**STANDING OVATION:** Duxbury firefighter John Montosi receives a Medal of Valor from Gov. Deval Patrick and Deputy Gov. Tim Murray at the Firefighter of the Year awards.



Duxbury firefighter John Montosi was recently honored by his peers for saving a woman from a fire in Pembroke earlier this year.